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UNCLAS VATICAN 004572

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EUR/WE (Levin); S/GAC FOR Tobias and Dybul

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [TBIO](#) [VT](#)

SUBJECT: WORLD AIDS DAY: VATICAN CALLS FOR TOTAL CARE

Ref: a) 03 Vatican 3971; b) 03 Vatican 5427; c) Vatican

1389

1. The Vatican has called for total care and services for persons with HIV/AIDS in its 2004 message for World AIDS Day. The message, from the head of the Vatican's Council for Health Care issues, Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragan, reports that the Catholic Church provides almost 27 percent of care worldwide to persons with HIV/AIDS. This includes care given in clinics and hospices, as well as treatment and prevention programs (reftels). Cardinal Barragan called for an end to the stigma that "so often makes society harsh in relation to the AIDS victim" and then pointed out that HIV infection can occur through blood transfusions, mother-child transmission, and sexual contact.

2. Cardinal Barragan urged effective measures to combat virus transmission, including responsible behavior, the "virtue of chastity" and marital fidelity. He said policies to combat HIV/AIDS should include support for social and economic stability, economic solidarity from industrialized nations for poorer countries, reduction of the cost of anti-retroviral treatments, and information campaigns focused on mother-child transmission. He called for expanded care for HIV-positive infants and AIDS orphans, and for the elimination of discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS. The Cardinal said his department was working closely with African bishops at the express wish of Pope John Paul II to confront the pandemic on that continent. Barragan has also created a coordination mechanism within his Council to facilitate requests for assistance and funding from smaller Catholic entities working on HIV/AIDS care, prevention, and treatment.

3. Comment: The Holy See remains an increasingly committed partner in global efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, and is devoting increasing personnel and resources to support international prevention and treatment efforts. Its reach and influence in the developing world make it a key partner for education and prevention campaigns, particularly in implementing elements "A" and "B" of the Administration's "A-B-C" (Abstain, Be faithful, Use Condoms) policy to combat the pandemic. End Comment.

Nicholson